

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 STATE 268185
ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY EA/VLC:FBROWN:JG
APPROVED BY EA - MR. OAKLEY
S/S-O:TGMARTIN

-----012553 090503Z /21

R 090316Z NOV 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 268185

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: US, AS, VM

SUBJECT: HOLBROOKE LETTER TO FONMIN PEACOCK

REF: A. STATE 178646, B. CANBERRA 7485, C. STATE
260795

FOR AMBASSADOR ALSTON FROM HOLBROOKE

1. THERE FOLLOWS TEXT OF REVISED LETTER TO FOREIGN
MINISTER PEACOCK WITH MY THOUGHTS ON SRV VICE FOREIGN
MINISTER PHAN HIEN AND CURRENT STATE OF US-VIETNAMESE
RELATIONS. WE ARE POUCHING SIGNED ORIGINAL. HOWEVER,
IF PHAN HIEN'S ARRIVAL DATE SO DICTATES, PLEASE GIVE
PEACOCK COPY OF CABLE WHENEVER YOU WISH.

2. BEGIN TEXT:

"DEAR ANDREW:
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 268185

"SINCE PHAN HIEN WILL BE PAYING A VISIT TO CANBERRA SOON,
I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE USEFUL FOR YOU TO HAVE MY SENSE OF
HIM AS WELL AS SOME BACKGROUND ON OUR EFFORTS TO NORMALIZE
RELATIONS WITH VIETNAM.

"HIEN IS AN EXPERIENCED DIPLOMAT--CAUTIOUS, PRECISE,

WELL-PREPARED, AND ABLE TO USE WHATEVER FLEXIBILITY HE HAS TO FULL ADVANTAGE. HE HANDLED THE VISIT OF THE WOODCOCK COMMISSION TO HANOI IN MARCH WITH GREAT SKILL. THEIR PROGRAM WAS EXTREMELY WELL ORGANIZED AND THE DELEGATION WAS CHARMED BY HIS GRACIOUSNESS AND WIT. I WOULD JUDGE HIM TO BE A TOP-NOTCH BUREAUCRAT BUT NOT A MEMBER OF THE SRV'S POLICY-MAKING COUNCILS. HIEN SPEAKS ENGLISH QUITE CAPABLY BUT PREFERS TO DO BUSINESS IN VIETNAMESE THROUGH AN INTERPRETER. HIS FRENCH IS EXCELLENT.

"YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE RESULTS OF THE TWO PARIS MEETINGS AND I WOULD ONLY PASS ON SEVERAL OBSERVATIONS. FIRST, HIEN DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE A LONG LEASH; WHILE NOT CONFINED TO QUOTING PREPARED TEXTS, HE DID NOT STRAY FAR FROM HIS TALKING POINTS. THE STICKING POINT IN NORMALIZATION HAS BEEN VIETNAMESE INSISTENCE ON COMMITMENT OF AMERICAN AID AS A CONDITION FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. WITH ONE EXCEPTION THE VIETNAMESE HAVE REFRAINED FROM USING PRIVATELY OR PUBLICLY THE TERM 'REPARATIONS,' REFERRING INSTEAD TO THE U.S. OBLIGATION 'TO HEAL THE WOUNDS OF WAR.' WE APPRECIATE THEIR SUBTLETY BUT THE FACT REMAINS THAT THEIR INSISTENCE ON AID AS A PRECONDITION, HOWEVER, IT IS COUCHED, LED TO AN IMPASSE IN NEGOTIATIONS IN MAY AND JUNE. PUBLIC INSISTENCE UPON IT AFTER THE MAY MEETING HELPED PRECISE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 268185

PITATE A CRISIS IN CONGRESS.

"YOU ARE AWARE OF THE RECENT BITTER DEBATES IN CONGRESS, OVER INDIRECT AID THROUGH INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFI'S) TO SEVEN COUNTRIES, INCLUDING THE THREE INDOCHINA NATIONS. WE NARROWLY AVERTED AMENDMENTS TO THE LAW WHICH WOULD HAVE SEVERELY AFFECTED OUR ABILITY TO HELP DEVELOPING COUNTRIES THROUGH THE IFI'S AND INDEED WOULD HAVE SERIOUSLY DAMAGED THE INSTITUTIONS THEMSELVES. TO DO SO, THE PRESIDENT PLEDGED OUR OPPOSITION TO ANY IFI LOANS FOR THE SEVEN COUNTRIES IN QUESTION. THE IDEA OF DIRECT AID TO VIETNAM, OR COURSE, IS COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE TO THE CONGRESS OR THE AMERICAN PUBLIC, AS WELL AS THE ADMINISTRATION. THE VIETNAMESE HAVE SEEMED TO BELIEVE THAT THEIR PERSISTENCE WILL LEAD TO A CHANGE IN POSITION ON THIS POINT. THEY ARE WRONG.

WE HAVE EXPLAINED ALL THIS TO THE VIETNAMESE AT LENGTH, MOST RECENTLY AT THE UNGA IN OCTOBER, WHEN I TALKED TWICE PRIVATELY WITH VICE FOREIGN MINISTER NGUYEN CO THACH. THEY ALSO HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THIS WITH

OTHER OBSERVERS OF THE US SCENE. BY NOW THERE SHOULD BE NO LACK OF UNDERSTANDING CONCERNING OUR DOMESTIC IMPERATIVES. WE HAVE MADE THE POINT THAT AMERICAN PRIVATE AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IS POSSIBLE (SOME HAS ALREADY BEEN PROVIDED) AND THAT DIPLOMATIC REGOGNITION COULD CONCEIVABLY EASE THE WAY TOWARD SERIOUS CONSIDERATION OF GOVERNMENTAL HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN THE FUTURE. UNFORTUNATELY, ASSISTANCE THROUGH THE IFI'S HAS BECOME MORE DIFFICULT IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE, ALTHOUGH OUR OBLIGATION TO VOTE AGAINST LOANS DOES NOT MEAN THEY WILL NOT BE APPROVED.

"CONCERNING THE TRADE EMBARGO, WE HAVE PLEDGED TO REMOVE IT ONCE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS ARE ESTABLISHED AND MISSIONS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 STATE 268185

OPENED. WE PERMIT EXCEPTIONS FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS. THE EMBARGO ALSO APPLIES TO SUBSIDIARIES OF AMERICAN BUSINESSES ABROAD. THE PROSPECT OF LIFTING THE TRADE EMBARGO AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONS SHOULD BE AN IMPORTANT INCENTIVE TO THE SRV, SINCE THEY ARE CLEARLY VERY INTERESTED IN WHAT AMERICAN BUSINESS CAN PROVIDE. FOR EXAMPLE, AMERICAN OIL COMPANIES, WHICH ARE IN THE BEST POSITION TO EXPLOIT VIETNAM'S OIL POTENTIAL, CANNOT RESUME EXPLORATION WHILE THE EMBARGO CONTINUES -- AND FRANKLY, THEY WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE INTERESTED IN THE ABSENCE OF CLEARLY IMPROVED RELATIONS EVEN IF THERE WERE NO EMBARGO.

"I DO NOT WISH TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE MAY AND JUNE MEETINGS WITH PHAN HIEN NOR MY TALKS AT THE UN WITH NGUYEN CO THACH WERE WITHOUT POSITIVE RESULT. ON THE CONTRARY, THE ATMOSPHERE WAS CORDIAL AND UNPOLEMIC. NGUYEN CO THACH EXPRESSED AN INTEREST INFINDING AN IMAGINATIVE APPROACH TO RELATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND VIETNAM, BUT DID NOT MAKE ANY SPECIFIC PROPOSALS. NOR DID HE BACK AWAY FROM THE LINKAGE OF A US COMMITMENT ON ASSISTANCE WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. NEVERTHELESS, HIS REMARKS COULD PRESAGE SOMETHING NEW FROM THE VIETNAMESE AT THE NEXT ROUND OF TALKS. THERE HAVE BEEN OTHER POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS. ON SEPTEMBER 30 THE VIETNAMESE MADE GOOD ON THEIR PROMISE TO RETURN THE REMAINS OF 22 AMERICANS. DURING BRIEF TECHNICAL TALKS IN HANOI THEN, IT WAS AGAIN MADE CLEAR THAT FURTHER EFFORT--AND RESULTS--ON THE MIA ISSUE ARE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS OF PROGRESS TOWARD NORMALIZATION. VIETNAM HAS NOW ENTERED THE UN, A STEP WE WELCOMED; BOTH THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY EXCHANGED CORDIAL WORDS WITH VIETNAMESE AMBASSADOR DINH BA THI AT THE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 05 STATE 268185

PRESIDENT'S UN LUNCHEON OCTOBER 5. THEY REITERATED

OUR DESIRE TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH VIETNAM AND PUT
THE PAST BEHIND US.

"AS TO POSSIBLE RESULTS FROM A THIRD ROUND, WHICH WE
HAVE PROPOSED FOR DECEMBER OR AFTER, I WOULD HOPE THAT
THE VIETNAMESE RECOGNIZE THE ADVANTAGES OF MOVING AHEAD
NOW AS OPPOSED TO LETTING MATTERS DRIFT. THEY HAVE A
CLEARER UNDERSTANDING OF THE REALITIES OF THE AID QUES-
TION AND THE U.S. DETERMINATION NOT TO ACCEPT THEIR
POINT OF VIEW ON SUPPOSED OBLIGATIONS. I HOPE THAT
THEY ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT ALTHOUGH WE BELIEVE THAT RELA-
TIONS WITH THE SRV ARE DESIRABLE, THEY ARE BY NO MEANS
A NECESSITY FOR THE UNITED STATES. IN FACT, THE ADMINIS-
TRATION WOULD HAVE TO PAY A POLITICAL PRICE AT HOME IN
ORDER TO ESTABLISH NORMAL RELATIONS.

"ALL OF THE ABOVE, OF COURSE, IS FOR YOUR BACKGROUND.
I HOPE YOU COULD FIND WAYS TO CONVEY TO PHAN HIEN THAT
WE ARE SINCERE IN WISHING TO MOVE FORWARD IN IMPROVING
RELATIONS WITH VIETNAM AND THAT WE ARE PREPARED TO DO
WHAT IS POSSIBLE WITHIN EXISTING LEGISLATIVE RESTRAINTS,
PUTTING IN PROPER PERSPECTIVE DOMESTIC POLITICAL FACTORS.

"SINCERELY,

RICHARD HOLBROOKE" END TEXT. VANCE

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TEXT, FOREIGN RELATIONS, DIPLOMATIC COMMUNICATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 09-Nov-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE268185
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: FBROWN:JG
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770413-0608
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19771178/aaaacoob.tel
Line Count: 203
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: ab3c2f1e-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 77 STATE 178646, 77 CANBERRA 7485
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14-Apr-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 652742
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HOLBROOKE LETTER TO FONMIN PEACOCK
TAGS: PDIP, US, AS, VM
To: CANBERRA
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/ab3c2f1e-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009